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The Voluntary Reading Center Project was designed to extend regular reading center activities beyond normal school hours in order to serve more students. A total of 101 students in nine secondary schools received instruction for one semester; a total of 100 students in three secondary schools received instruction for two semesters. The project was evaluated by pretests and post-tests to determine reading vocabulary achievement and student attitude changes and by reactions solicited from the teachers and principals involved. Test results indicated a mean reading vocabulary gain of 0.39 years for one-semester participants and 1.13 years for two-semester participants. There were no significant changes in student attitudes. School personnel responses were generally favorable except that most teachers indicated difficulty in procuring interested students. Three of the eight teachers suggested that the project be dropped. Based on these results, it was recommended that the project either be changed so that more students could participate or continued only in schools where it would be implemented for two semesters. Sample copies of the student attitude measurement and school personnel questionnaire are included in appendixes. (BS)

**MILWAUKEE PUBLIC SCHOOLS**  
**Division of Curriculum and Instruction**

**STRENGTHENING READING SERVICES  
THROUGH INCREASING PROVISIONS FOR  
SECONDARY BEFORE OR AFTER SCHOOL READING CENTERS**

**SEPTEMBER 6, 1966 -- JUNE 16, 1967**

**PROGRAM EVALUATION**

**conducted by**

**DEPARTMENT OF PSYCHOLOGICAL SERVICES AND EDUCATIONAL RESEARCH**

**in conjunction with**

**DEPARTMENT OF SPECIAL EDUCATION**

**U. S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, EDUCATION & WELFARE  
OFFICE OF EDUCATION**

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## INTRODUCTION

### General Purpose

This project is a reading development program. It is specifically designed to meet the needs of secondary school children from areas of economic deprivation who exhibit reading deficiencies. Normally such problems are handled through reading center activities conducted during the regular school-day schedule. It has been found however that all students requiring special reading experiences cannot be effectively programmed into the regular operation. The purpose of this program, then, is to extend the reading center operation beyond normal school hours so that more students can be afforded the opportunity to receive special instruction in reading.

### Significance of the Project

This project is unique in that it offers an academic subject to students who participate on a voluntary basis either before or after normal school hours. This would seem to require a high degree of motivation and positive attitudes toward the school environment, and these attributes are not normally characteristic of the project area children.

### Project Dates

The project proposal specified that this project should be conducted in ten secondary schools for the duration of the 1966-67 school year (September 6, through June 16). During the first semester eight schools were successful in initiating the project activities. However,

in five of the schools the project was dropped at the end of the first semester leaving only three schools which were active for the entire school year. The schools which did not participate during the second semester, or did not participate at all, were not successful in recruiting enough students on a voluntary basis to justify the initiation or continuation of the project.

### Project Objectives

The specific objectives as indicated in the original project proposal were:

1. To provide ten secondary After-School Reading Center Programs within the project area.
2. That reading center service currently available to public school pupils be extended to include the pupils of the four parochial school systems.

### Derived Objectives

As a result of implementing the above program development objectives, it was anticipated that the following objectives relative to pupil behavior could be fulfilled:

1. To improve reading skills for children with retarded reading development.
2. To develop a positive change in pupil attitude toward school.
3. To develop in the pupils an eagerness to read books and magazines, and otherwise evidence a greater desire to learn through reading.
4. To develop increased pupil self-confidence and security.

## PROJECT POPULATION

Schools Included in this Project

The ten secondary schools proposed for this project are listed in Table I. Also included are the semesters which each school participated in project activities.

TABLE I  
PROJECT OPERATION BY SCHOOL

School	Project Operated 1st Semester	Project Operated 2nd Semester
Custer	no	no
King	yes	no
Kosciuszko	yes	no
Lincoln	yes	no
North Division	no	no
Riverside	yes	no
Roosevelt	yes	yes
South Division	yes	no
West Division	yes	yes
Wells Street Jr. High	yes	yes

Pupils Served by this Project

Pupils who participated in this project did so on a voluntary basis. Some schools were more successful in recruiting students than other schools. This is indicated in Table II which lists the number of students in each school for each semester.

TABLE II  
STUDENTS INVOLVED IN THE PROJECT

School	Number of Participants 1st Semester	Number of Participants 2nd Semester
Custer	0	0
King	4	0
Kosciuszko	6	0
Lincoln	10	0
North Division	0	0
Riverside	5	0
Roosevelt	31	64
South Division	5	0
West Division	10	6
Wells Street Jr. High	30	30
Total	101	100

During the first semester, the 101 pupils who participated in the project attended the reading center a mean of 12.27 times, and the 100 students who participated during the second semester attended a mean of 12.45 times.



## PROJECT PROCEDURES AND ACTIVITIES

### Selection Procedures

This reading center program was conducted on a voluntary basis. No formal pupil selection procedure was implemented, and the activities were open to any pupils desiring to participate. The teachers were selected because of their willingness to remain after school to teach in the reading center and because of their qualifications in the subject area. The ten schools included in the initial proposal were selected because they did not have an active after-school reading center program. The eight active schools included in this report were the only ones able to implement the program.

### Project Operational Procedures

The details of project operation were left to the discretion of the individual teachers in the participating schools. At some schools the reading center was left open after normal school hours, and any student who came was given individualized instruction. At other schools the center was opened before school, or before school and after school and students volunteered to participate. At still other schools several reading clubs were formed, e.g. one for boys and another for girls. These clubs would meet several times a week (either before or after school), elect officers, and conduct their activities in a democratic manner.

The teachers taught with the same materials and supplies that were used during the regular school day reading center operation. Due to the limited magnitude of this program, the "in-service" and "consultant"

phases of the project were not implemented. However, all teachers did receive the assistance of a supervising teacher.

## EVALUATION PLAN

### Research Design

In order to evaluate this project, a test-retest type of design was employed. In addition to this basic design, a descriptive evaluation of the program was achieved through questionnaires. Specifically the design includes:

1. A reading vocabulary test which was administered at the beginning of the program and again at its conclusion.
2. A student attitude scale which was administered at the beginning of the program and again at its conclusion.
3. Two questionnaires - one completed by the after-school reading center teachers and one completed by the appropriate principals.

### Sample Selection

An attempt was made to give the Gates Basic Reading Test (Form RV) as a pretest and again as a post test to all students who participated in this project. In five of the schools, the project operated only during the first semester and 47 of the 71 participants in these schools were given the criterion test. All students could not be tested because of sporadic attendance, withdrawals, transfers, etc. The test dates for these 47 students were September and January and the testing was administered by the Reading Center Teachers. The remaining three schools operated for the entire year, and 58 of the 100 participants in these schools were tested in September and again in June.

A locally devised student attitude scale was given to 20 students in two schools in September and again in January. This instrument was administered by an independent tester from the Department of Educational Research.

Questionnaires were mailed to the Reading Center Teachers and school principals in May. In both cases, all personnel contacted responded to the mailed request.

#### Procedures for Analysis of Data

The pretest and post test reading vocabulary test scores were converted to a gain score for each individual student. Mean gain scores were then computed, converted to mean grade equivalent gains, and compared to the test norms. This procedure furnishes information relative to the students in the project as compared to the test norm group.

The data from the student attitude instrument were analyzed with a "t" test. The attitude instrument incorporated six concepts which the students were to respond to on a seven point Likert scale (See Appendix A). A "t" value was then calculated for each of the six concepts to determine if there was a significant change in attitude.

The data obtained from the Reading Center Teacher and Administrator, response forms were tabulated to give a subjective evaluation of the merit of the program, since this type of data does not lend itself to comparative statistical analysis.

#### Limitations of Data Collection Procedure

The data collected to evaluate this program are limited by the absence of a comparative control group, by test norms which are not completely appropriate, and by the common difficulties encountered in measuring attitudes. A control group was not selected because the administrative task of selecting a valid comparison group was too great to implement in the time allotted for program evaluation. Appropriate test norms reflecting reading vocabulary

grade achievement levels for children from areas of economic deprivation are not available, and this caused the gain in reading vocabulary grade equivalent to be calculated from the conventional test norms which may not be constructed to reflect the culture of the children in the program. The student attitude instrument was constructed by the research staff of the Milwaukee Public Schools and complete reliability and validity data for this instrument have not yet been developed.

## RESULTS

### Reading Vocabulary Test

In order to evaluate the objective of improved reading skills, the Gates Basic Reading Test - Reading Vocabulary was given to 47 students in the five schools which participated only during the first semester and to 58 students in the three schools which participated for the entire year. Two forms of the test were given, one form as the pretest and the other as a post test. The mean grade equivalent gain for the students who participated for one semester was 0.39 years with a standard deviation of 0.98 years.

The test norm group made a change of 0.5 years per semester so these students did not exhibit a change as great as would be expected from a typical group. The mean grade equivalent gain for the students who participated for the entire school year was 1.13 years with a standard deviation of 1.04 years. This gain is in excess of that demonstrated by the norm group, and is viewed quite favorably since the project population was made up of those who felt a need for supplemental reading instruction.

It is important to note the difference in achievement between those who participated for the full year as compared to those who participated for only one semester. The major gain seems to take place during the second semester of instruction indicating that the procedure implemented by this project should be continued for two semesters to achieve optimum results.

### Student Attitude Instrument

The student attitude instrument was administered in order to evaluate the objectives of developing a positive change in pupil attitude toward

school, and developing increased pupil self-confidence and sense of security. The same attitude instrument was given twice - once at the start of the program and again at its conclusion. The attitude instrument elicited a response from the pupils concerning their feelings about:

1. Their school
2. Teachers in their school
3. Homework
4. The subject taught in the reading center
5. The other students in the reading center
6. Themselves in school

Since the students responded on a Likert type scale, a numerical value could be assigned to each response. A "t" value comparing the responses on the first administration with the responses on the second was then computed for each of the six concepts. These "t" values are show in Table III. The most positive response possible was assigned a numerical value of seven, the most negative response possible was assigned a numerical value of one, and a neutral response was assigned a numerical value of four.

TABLE III

"t" VALUES FOR THE DIFFERENCE SCORES ON THE  
STUDENT ATTITUDE INSTRUMENT

Concept	Mean Value Pretest	Mean Value Post Test	Difference	"t" Value	Significance
My school	5.61	5.24	-0.37	-0.74	Not Significant at .05
Teachers in my school	5.42	5.49	0.07	0.16	Not Significant at .05
Homework	5.53	5.81	0.27	0.61	Not Significant at .05
The subject taught in the reading center	5.75	5.48	-0.27	-0.63	Not Significant at .05
Other students in the reading center	4.8	5.27	0.47	0.83	Not Significant at .05
Myself in School	5.66	5.29	0.26	0.59	Not Significant at .05

None of the attitude changes measured were significant at .05, hence no conclusions can be drawn concerning these data. This should not be construed to mean that changes in attitude did not occur, because it is entirely possible that changes did occur, but the instrument employed was not sensitive enough to pick them up.

#### Reading Center Teacher Reactions

A Secondary Reading Center Teacher Questionnaire (See Appendix B) was mailed to all eight teachers participating in this project.



All responded, and the teacher reactions are summarized in the following paragraphs.

The attendance data are given earlier in this report. However, it is important to note that only three of the eight teachers were able to solicit students to participate in the project during the second semester.

When asked how well the students received the program one teacher indicated that they were "very enthusiastic", five indicated that they were "enthusiastic", and two indicated that they were "apathetic". This response pattern indicates that those who did participate were generally positive about the project.

The question concerning what type of students participated in the project yielded five teachers who indicated that "students most in need of supplemental reading center instruction" participated and three teachers who indicated that "students moderately in need of supplemental reading center instruction" participated. These data would seem to indicate that, in most cases, the project is reaching the proper students.

When asked why students volunteered to participate in this project, four of the teachers indicated that the "students recognized their need for extra instruction in reading", one indicated that "students desired the social interaction present in the voluntary program", and three indicated that the "students were asked to come".

This indicates the interest some students show for this project, but also illustrates the apathy shown by others.

When asked if the project should be continued in subsequent years, five teachers indicated that it should and three said that it should not. This response illustrated the fact that the project was not successful in all

schools.

The most frequent response for the most positive attribute of the project was that students who did participate were able to achieve a degree of success that was not normal for them. The model response for the most negative aspect of the project was that students were not willing to come for non-credit at non-normal school hours. Almost all teachers had difficulty recruiting students.

### Principal Reactions

The Principals of the eight schools participating in this project were asked to indicate their opinion concerning the effect which this project had on:

1. Teaching-learning environment
2. Pupil attitudes
3. Teacher morale

The Principals were instructed to respond to these objectives according to a scale of three points for "outstanding", two points for "satisfactory", one point for "unsatisfactory", and zero points for "no opinion". A mean was calculated for each objective with the following results:

1. Teaching-learning environment = 2.167
2. Pupil attitude = 1.833
3. Teacher morale = 2.167

In the opinion of the principals the program was more than successful in fostering good teaching-learning environment and teacher morale, but was less than successful in developing pupil attitudes.

## SUMMARY

The Voluntary Reading Center Project was designed to extend the regular reading center activities beyond normal school hours in order to serve more students. The project was proposed to operate in ten schools for the duration of the school year, however, it operated in just eight schools for the first semester, and for both semesters in only three schools. A total of 101 students received a mean of 12.27 instruction periods during the first semester, and a total of 100 students received a mean of 12.45 instruction periods during the second semester.

The objectives of the project were:

1. To improve reading skills for children with retarded reading development.
2. To develop a positive change in pupil attitude toward school.
3. To develop in the pupils an eagerness to read books and magazines, and otherwise evidence a greater desire to learn through reading.
4. To develop increased pupil self-confidence and sense of security.

The project was evaluated by ① measuring student reading vocabulary achievement on a pretest-post test basis, ② by measuring student attitudes on a pretest-post test basis, and ③ by soliciting reactions from the project teachers and principals of the school involved.

The evaluation results revealed that students in the five schools which participated in this project for only the first semester made a mean gain in reading vocabulary achievement of 0.39 years in one semester while students in the three schools which operated for the entire year made a mean gain of <sup>1.13</sup>1.12. This indicates that the project is much more successful when operated for the entire year. However, there is a contradiction present

here because the teachers experienced great difficulty in soliciting student participation and the project was dropped in five of the eight schools.

Student attitudes instrument results revealed no significant changes in student attitudes and no conclusions could be drawn relative to this objective. This is not to say that attitude changes might not have occurred because changes of this type are most difficult to measure.

School personnel responses to questionnaires about this project were generally favorable except that most of the teachers indicated that they had considerable difficulty in procuring students interested in attending the project activities. Three of the eight teachers recommended that the project be dropped.

Based on the results of this evaluation it is recommended that this project either be changed so that more student participation is possible or continued only in those schools where the teachers were successful in continuing the project for both semesters. This is especially pertinent in view of the achievement data which indicate that the major gain occurs during the second semester of participation.

## APPENDIXES

APPENDIX A

MILWAUKEE PUBLIC SCHOOLS  
Student Attitude Instrument

School \_\_\_\_\_

Class \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

Name \_\_\_\_\_

How I feel about:

1. MY SCHOOL

Very bad \_\_\_\_\_ Very good

2. TEACHERS IN MY SCHOOL

Very good \_\_\_\_\_ Very bad

3. HOMEWORK

Very good \_\_\_\_\_ Very bad

4. THE SUBJECT TAUGHT IN THE CLASS I AM IN NOW

Very bad \_\_\_\_\_ Very good

5. THE OTHER STUDENTS IN THE CLASS I AM IN NOW

Very bad \_\_\_\_\_ Very good

6. MYSELF IN SCHOOL

Very good \_\_\_\_\_ Very bad

APPENDIX B

MILWAUKEE PUBLIC SCHOOLS  
Division of Curriculum and Instruction  
Department of Psychological Services  
and Educational Research

Voluntary Reading  
Center Project (s-2)

Secondary Reading Center  
Teacher Questionnaire

1. How many students attended your voluntary reading center program during the past school year? (enter numbers)

1st semester \_\_\_\_\_ 2nd semester \_\_\_\_\_ Total \_\_\_\_\_

2. In your opinion, how well did the students receive the voluntary reading center program in your school? (check one)

- ☐ students were very enthusiastic  
☐ students were enthusiastic  
☐ students were apathetic  
☐ students were negative about the program

3. What type of students participated in this program? (check one)

- ☐ students most in need of supplementary reading center instructions  
☐ students moderately in need of supplementary reading center instructions  
☐ students not really in need of supplementary reading center instruction

4. In your opinion, what was the prime reason that caused students to volunteer to participate in this program? (check one)

- ☐ students recognized their need for extra instruction in reading  
☐ students were highly motivated toward school in general  
☐ students desired the social interaction present in this voluntary program  
☐ students were asked to come  
☐ other (please specify)
-

5. Do you feel that the program should be continued in following years?

☐ Yes

☐ No

6. What do you feel was the most positive attribute of this program?  
(please describe)

7. What do you feel was the most negative attribute of this program?

8. What changes would you recommend for this program in the future?  
(please describe)



School \_\_\_\_\_

### Rating Key

- 3 = Outstanding  
2 = Satisfactory  
1 = Unsatisfactory  
0 = No Opinion

### OBJECTIVES (AIMS OR GOALS OF PROJECTS)

Objective | As a result of this project, there has been improvement in:

[illegible]